

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Opens Regulatory Guidance Letter for Comment

WASHINGTON, D.C., (December 18, 2001) - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is asking other federal agencies to comment on a recently issued regulatory guidance letter which sets standards for mitigating permitted impacts to the aquatic ecosystem. The comment period ends March 1, 2002. The Hon. Mike Parker, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), who provides civilian oversight of the Corps, will oversee any revisions.

"We want to make a sincere effort to address the concerns that have been raised in order to ensure proper protections to the aquatic ecosystem," said Brig. Gen. Robert Griffin, the Corps' Director of Civil Works. "A primary concern was that the Corps had backed off from the policy of 'no net loss' of wetlands. That was certainly not the guidance letter's intent, so we need to make sure the language is clear and direct." The guidance letter may serve as a reference document pending additional review.

The Corps had prepared the guidance letter in response to recommendations in a report from the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences, which recommended ways to improve the Corps' mitigation procedures.

Mitigation can offset adverse impacts by restoring former wetlands, enhancing existing ones, establishing new wetlands where none existed before, or preserving high-value wetlands threatened for development.

Regulatory Guidance Letter 01-1 and the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences Report are accessible online at http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/hot_topics/ht_2001/rglmitigation.pdf. Access the Regulatory Program web site at <http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/cecwo/reg/index.html>